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Abstract
Texas Tech University's agricultural communications program began in 1973. Using a historical case study research design, the researchers explored the course offerings, activities, and departmental publications during the previous 40 years. Although the program first offered the agricultural communications option, it took nearly 20 years for an undergraduate degree in this specialization to be made official. This study provides the story of how the program began and how it evolved over time. Other institutions that offer agricultural communications degrees, or are considering this program area, will learn about the gradual development of a lasting program.

Keywords
historical, degree program, agricultural communications, Texas Tech University

Research

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Chelsey Ann Ahrens and Courtney Gibson

Abstract

Texas Tech University's agricultural communications program began in 1973. Using a historical case study research design, the researchers explored the course offerings, activities, and departmental publications during the previous 40 years. Although the program first offered the agricultural communications option, it took nearly 20 years for an undergraduate degree in this specialization to be made official. This study provides the story of how the program began and how it evolved over time. Other institutions that offer agricultural communications degrees, or are considering this program area, will learn about the gradual development of a lasting program.

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Introduction

In recent years, the agricultural communications degree program at Texas Tech University (TTU) has experienced a steady increase in the number of students declaring this major and eventually graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Communications. Weckman, Witham, and Telg (2000) found agricultural communications programs have experienced a steady increase in enrollment and believe enrollment will either continue to increase or remain steady. Because of this, many agricultural colleges across the U.S. are adopting agricultural communications degree programs and are expanding current programs to include minors and advanced degrees. By understanding the history of a successful agricultural communications program, new and emerging agricultural communications degree programs can utilize that information for their own growth and expansion.

Home departments are not uncommon when new programs are being developed (Tucker, Whaley, & Cano, 2003). The Department of Agricultural Education was home to agricultural communications when an option in agricultural communications was first offered at TTU. Agricultural communications has since evolved and no longer needs a home department, but rather jointly shares a department at TTU – the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications.

Once programs are established, it is important to conduct research to ensure faculty are providing the most relevant, up-to-date information possible and meeting employer's needs. Irlbeck and Akers (2009) recommended that agricultural communications programs conduct research

to understand employer needs and improvements that can be made to current programs to meet those needs. Faculty and graduate students within agricultural communications at TTU have recently revisited the curriculum to determine if it is effectively meeting employers' needs. Surveys have been sent to alumni of agricultural communications to see if extracurricular involvement helps to gain employment, as well as to understand the average salary graduates from the program receive. Morgan (2012) conducted focus groups to better understand the competencies students in agricultural communications should possess. On the same token, focus groups have been conducted at TTU with recent graduates to understand if the curriculum offered in the department is up-to-date. As a result of these investigations, a question arose prior to an agricultural communications program meeting: "What is the history of the agricultural communications program at Texas Tech University?"

It is beneficial for faculty members, and even current students, to understand how the academic program in which they are involved has evolved over time (Knauft, 2006). This is vital because not all members of the department obtain degrees from the same institution, and even those that did may not have a full understanding of the current program's history. Knowing and understanding the history helps to shape the program and identify alumni who are currently in the workforce, which can inform the future direction of the program.

Significance of the Study

This research is a valuable aid to programs of agricultural communications for many reasons. For those who work or attend school at an institution, knowing and understanding the history of the degree program at that particular institution provides a greater appreciation and understanding of the program. Additionally, this historical case study provides a resource that individuals in other agricultural communications programs can reference if they are interested in researching their own program's history. Furthermore, agricultural communications is an ever-evolving degree program due to technological advances in communications, changing agricultural demographics, and external trends (Doerfert & Miller, 2006). To meet the challenges these factors introduce, programs must be willing to take stock of where they are and where they need to be. The findings from this research project provide documentation of the modifications to the agricultural communications degree plan including why and how the program evolved. This may serve as a model for other agricultural communications programs to develop or enhance their own curriculum.

Literature Review

Iowa State University was the first institution to offer courses in agricultural journalism in 1905 (Duncan, 1957). When agricultural communications first became an academic program, it was comprised of mainly male students who were seeking a degree that offered courses in science, agriculture and journalism (Tucker et al., 2003). Now, agricultural communication degree programs have their own courses, which have influences from journalism/mass communications, industry and academia (Tucker et al., 2003).

Sprecker and Rudd (1998) found practitioners think "agricultural communicators are not agriculturalists primarily, but communicators who have a specialty" (p. 40). Even though social media has become an important tool in a communicator's toolbox in today's technological society, the role of mass media is still important to agriculture, both in the United States as well as other countries as Irfan, Muhammad, Khan, and Asif (2006) point out. They found that mass media is an impor-

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tant means of disseminating agricultural information and technologies to farmers. TV, radio and print media were the top three forms of media farmers utilized to acquire information (Irfan et al., 2006). Agricultural communications programs address each of these forms of media along with social media in a way that emphasizes their use among agriculturalists.

Knauft (2006) pointed out that many undergraduate students are not familiar with the history of the program in which they are enrolled or even the history of agriculture in their state or region. By understanding the history, students can better understand how and why programs evolved to aid in their understanding of campus policies and support for growth and development (Knauft, 2006).

To understand the history the agricultural communications program at TTU, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How has the agricultural communications degree program at Texas Tech University evolved?
2. Why did the agricultural communications degree program become a part of the curriculum at Texas Tech University?
3. What are the major milestones in the agricultural communications degree program at Texas Tech University?

Methodology

Qualitative research methods were utilized for this study, specifically case study and historical research methods. Case study research is when a phenomenon of interest is studied in-depth in real-life settings and from the participants' perspective (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Case study research allowed this study to focus on the agricultural communications program at TTU and provided an in-depth look into the history of the program. Thus, historical research, or the study of past phenomenon to better the understanding of something, was utilized (Gall et al., 2007).

It was also imperative to examine primary and secondary sources of information for this study. Purposive sampling was used to "maximize discovery of the heterogeneous patterns and problems that occur" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 82). Interviews were conducted with current and former faculty and staff members within the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications at TTU who have institutional knowledge about the program. These interviews served as sources for both primary and secondary information since some were here for most of the evolution of the degree program, but not all. These interviews can also be classified as oral histories since the individuals interviewed "witnessed or participated in events of potential historical significance" (Gall et al., 2007, p. 538). Other primary sources utilized include written documents or records and relics. Relics are objects that allow information from the past to be examined including textbooks and instructional devices (Gall et al., 2007). Utilizing the oral history interviews, written documents and records, relics, and a researcher's journal allowed for triangulation to occur. Lastly, a secondary source of information included notes from the Foundations of Agricultural Communications course, which incorporated the history of agricultural communications into the curriculum. The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to analyze the data.

Findings

There were no opportunities for students to seek a specific option, specialization or degree in agricultural communications at TTU until 40 years ago. Students – particularly female students

according to Jerry Stockton, Ed.D. (personal communication, January 24, 2013) – within agriculture wanted to major in communications but still have ties to agriculture. Therefore, Thomas Luther (T.L) Leach, head of the Department of Agricultural Education at the time, along with Lewis Eggenberger, Ph.D., wanted to help these students pursue their interests of journalism and agriculture. Under their leadership 40 years ago, in 1973, an option in agricultural communications was added to the agricultural education degree program at TTU. An option is similar to what some may call a track. At TTU, the agricultural communications option or track was established in the Department of Agricultural Education. Students who decided to pursue the option took the required communications courses instead of the agricultural education courses required. For a student to obtain an option in agricultural communications, they had to complete 29 hours of courses offered through mass communications.

Dr. Eggenberger volunteered to be the adviser for the Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT) organization shortly thereafter. ACT students published the first student publication – Aggie News – in 1974. The name quickly changed to the Ag Journal by the second issue. The Ag Journal was a college-wide newsletter the ACT members produced. In 1975, the curriculum for the agricultural communications option increased to 35 hours of mass communication credits, and in 1979, Dr. Stockton became the department head.

In 1982, the option evolved into a specialization with students completing 45 hours of communications credits (see Figure 1). It was at this time two agricultural communications courses were developed within the department – AGED 430 Agricultural Education Problems and AGED 431 Transfer of Agricultural Technology. These six credit hours were required along with 39 mass communications credit hours to make up the 45 hours required for the agricultural communications specialization. In AGED 430, students produced The Agriculturist, a student developed and published magazine that is still produced today. ACT also hosted its first banquet. In 1983, these courses remained the same, but the numbers changed. AGED 430 became AGED 4301 and AGED 431 became AGED 4302. Two years later, the department name changed from the Department of Agricultural Education to the Department of Agricultural Education and Mechanization.

Several more changes occurred in the late 1980s. On June 28, 1985, an advisory committee was formed to help provide recommendations for curriculum and to help place students in internships. The advisory committee consisted of private industry communications professionals, faculty, university staff, and students. Some suggestions the advisory committee made were implemented in 1987 with more course additions. A new agricultural communications course – AGED 3302 Agricultural Data Base Networks, Information Systems and Populace – was added to the curriculum. According to the 1987 course catalog, the course was described as "computer hardware and software used in agricultural data base networks, and the interface with the agricultural populace" (p. 94). Also, the course catalog encouraged students to join ACT and become active members.

In 1988, four more courses were added to the curriculum, increasing the number of required agricultural communications course hours to 24 and decreasing the number of required mass communications course hours to 16. The four courses were (see figure 2):

- AGED 2301 – Introduction to Agricultural Education and Information Systems
- AGED 3200 – Writing for Agriculture
- AGED 3303 – Communicating Agriculture to the Public

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- AGED 4100 – Seminar in Communications

The relationship between agricultural education and mass communications was good but until you have them in your building they're not really your students. If they're taking courses everywhere else then you don't see them. You know, part of being a good faculty and adviser is knowing your students and having them in class, said Steve Fraze, Ph.D. (personal communication, October 10, 2012)who has been a faculty member in the department since 1988. Because of perspectives like this and the increased popularity of agricultural communications, the program continued to evolve.

The early 1990s marked an exciting time for agricultural communications at TTU. In 1991, Paul Vaughn, Ph.D., became the department chair, and in 1993, the department name changed to the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications, as it is still called today, reflecting the growth and popularity of the agricultural communications program. Faculty members were also working toward creating an undergraduate degree in agricultural communications.

You know, you can analyze a transcript and know pretty well what a student did, but when you look at the bottom it says Bachelors of Science Agricultural Communications it means a whole lot on your transcript and on your diploma that hangs on the wall, said Dr. Fraze (personal communication, October 10, 2012).

And so, in 1994, a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Communications was finally offered through the department. Along with the creation of the undergraduate degree, several new courses were added (see Figure 3):

- ACOM 2301 – Introduction to Agricultural Communications
- ACOM 4000 – Internship in Agricultural Communications
- ACOM 4301 – Agricultural Communications Problems
- ACOM 4310 – Development of Agricultural Publications

Students were required to have a minimum of 132 hours to graduate with this bachelor's degree. In 1996, the Communicating Agriculture to the Public course was changed in the course catalog from an AGED prefix to an ACOM prefix. Also, ACOM 4300 Advanced Computer Applications in Agricultural Media Production was added.

Similar to the 1990s, the 2000s have marked another time of change. Matt Baker, Ph.D. was named department chair in 2001. Over the next several years, 2001-2005, more courses were added to the agricultural communications curriculum as well as the creation of some graduate level courses (see figure 4):

- ACOM 2305 – Digital Communications in Agriculture
- ACOM 4300 – Web Design in Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
- ACOM 5001 – Contemporary Issues in Agriculture
- ACOM 5303 – Advanced Computer Applications in Agricultural Communications
- ACOM 5307 – Methods of Technology Change

In 2004, the state enacted a policy that reduced the required number of hours for all degrees to 120. Because of this, faculty had to restructure the degree plan to meet the new state needs as

well as the needs of the students. Part of meeting those needs was creating a Master of Science in Agricultural Communications degree program to be offered for the first time in 2007. This degree required 36 hours of graduate courses.

Along with Dr. Fraze being named the department chair in 2008, more courses were offered both on the undergraduate and graduate levels between 2008 and 2010 (see Figure 5):

- ACOM 2303 – Digital Imaging in Agriculture
- ACOM 3305 – Layout and Design in Agricultural Sciences
- ACOM 4305 – Agricultural Communications Campaigns
- ACOM 4311 – Convergence in Agriculture Media
- ACOM 5302 – Knowledge Management in Agriculture and Natural Resources
- ACOM 5304 – Risk and Crisis Communication in Agriculture and Natural Resources
- ACOM 5306 – Foundations of Agricultural Communications
- ACOM 5308 – Utilizing Online Media in Agricultural Communications
- ACOM 7100 – Graduate Seminar

A 19 hour minor in agricultural communications was added in 2010 and after a three-year process, the Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Communications and Education was approved on October 27, 2011. Figure 7 depicts the courses currently offered at TTU for undergraduate and graduate students.

Figure 1

Agricultural Communications Specialization.

Basic Science Courses: 12 hours*	
BIOL 141	Biology of Plants
BIOL 142	Biology of Animals
CHEM 111	Experimental General Chemistry I (Laboratory)
CHEM 112	Experimental General Chemistry II (Laboratory)
CHEM 135	Essentials of Chemistry I
CHEM 136	Essentials of Chemistry II
PSS 3421	Fundamental Principles of Genetics
General Courses: 24 hours	
ENGL 131, 132	College Rhetoric
ENGL 239 or 3339	Technical Writing
HIST 231, 232	American History
POLS 231, 232	American Government
MATH 133 or 137	College Algebra or Mathematical Analysis
Communications Courses: 38 hours	
SCOM 338	Business & Professional Speech Communication
MCOM 130	Introduction to Mass Communications
TELE 331	Introduction to Telecommunications
ADV 334	Principles of Advertising
JOUR 331	News Writing
JOUR 332	Reporting
PHOT 231	Basic Photography
JOUR 448	Editing
AGED 430	Agricultural Educational Problems
AGED 431	Transfer of Agricultural Technology
Plus additional 7 hours** of communications courses.	
Agricultural Sciences Courses: 46 hours	
AGSC 111	Agricultural Industry
AECO 131	Introduction to Agricultural Economics
Plus 24 hours from the following: PSS 1300; ANSC 121 and 111; ENTO 221 and 211; FD T 230; AG E 135; PALA 134; PSS 1311 or 1312; R&WM 231, 232.	
Plus additional 18 hours** of 300-400 level agricultural sciences courses.	
Free Electives: 15 hours**	
Hours required for graduation, exclusive of P.E., Basic ROTC, or Band — 132.	

*Must complete at least 4 hours of chemistry and 4 hours of biology.
**Additional hours must be approved by the academic advisor and the dean.

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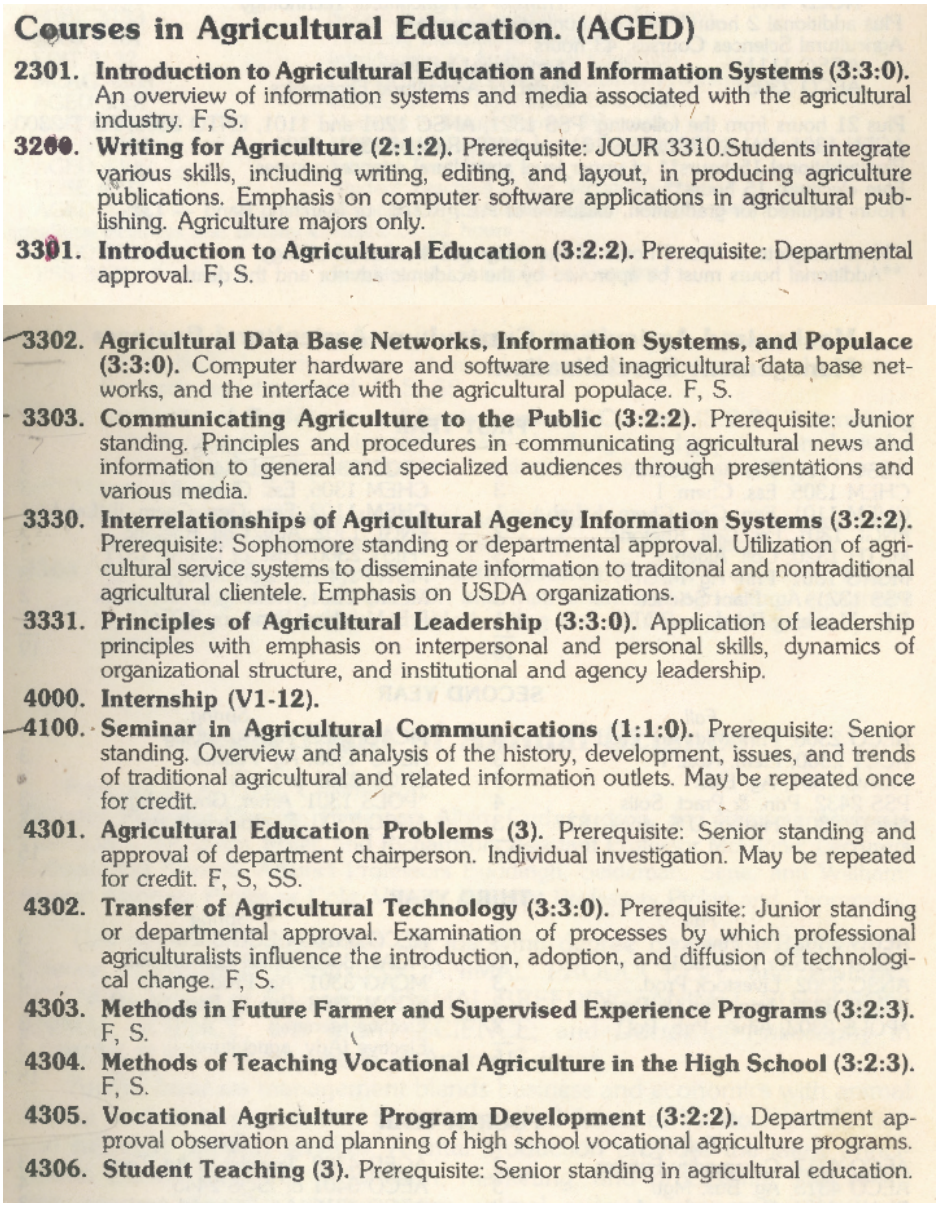
Figure 1. List of courses students specializing in agricultural communications at Texas Tech University in 1982 were required to take. Adapted from "Agricultural Communications Specialization," by Office of Official Publications, 1982, *Bulletin of Texas Tech University Undergraduate Catalog 1982-1983*, p. 83.

Figure 2



Courses in Agricultural Education. (AGED)

2301. Introduction to Agricultural Education and Information Systems (3:3:0). An overview of information systems and media associated with the agricultural industry. F, S.

3200. Writing for Agriculture (2:1:2). Prerequisite: JOUR 3310.Students integrate various skills, including writing, editing, and layout, in producing agriculture publications. Emphasis on computer software applications in agricultural publishing. Agriculture majors only.

3301. Introduction to Agricultural Education (3:2:2). Prerequisite: Departmental approval. F, S.

3302. Agricultural Data Base Networks, Information Systems, and Populace (3:3:0). Computer hardware and software used inagricultural data base networks, and the interface with the agricultural populace. F, S.

3303. Communicating Agriculture to the Public (3:2:2). Prerequisite: Junior standing. Principles and procedures in communicating agricultural news and information to general and specialized audiences through presentations and various media.

3330. Interrelationships of Agricultural Agency Information Systems (3:2:2). Prerequisite: Sophomore standing or departmental approval. Utilization of agricultural service systems to disseminate information to traditonal and nontraditional agricultural clientele. Emphasis on USDA organizations.

3331. Principles of Agricultural Leadership (3:3:0). Application of leadership principles with emphasis on interpersonal and personal skills, dynamics of organizational structure, and institutional and agency leadership.

4000. Internship (V1-12).

4100. Seminar in Agricultural Communications (1:1:0). Prerequisite: Senior standing. Overview and analysis of the history, development, issues, and trends of traditional agricultural and related information outlets. May be repeated once for credit.

4301. Agricultural Education Problems (3). Prerequisite: Senior standing and approval of department chairperson. Individual investigation. May be repeated for credit. F, S, SS.

4302. Transfer of Agricultural Technology (3:3:0). Prerequisite: Junior standing or departmental approval. Examination of processes by which professional agriculturalists influence the introduction, adoption, and diffusion of technological change. F, S.

4303. Methods in Future Farmer and Supervised Experience Programs (3:2:3). F, S.

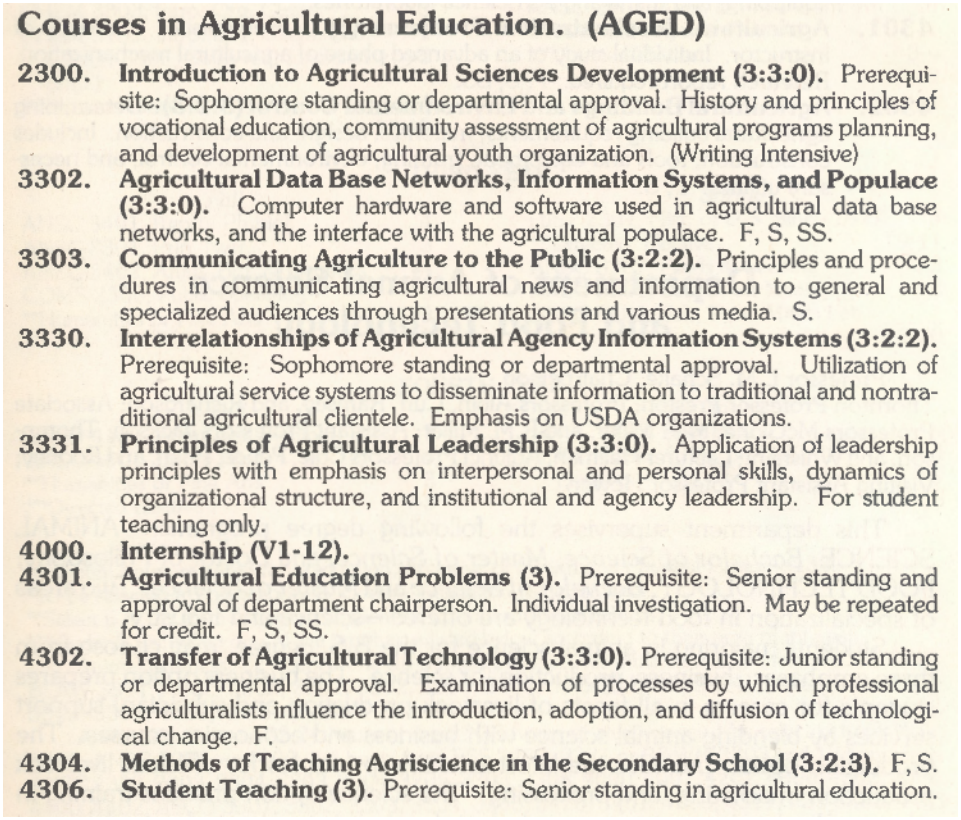
4304. Methods of Teaching Vocational Agriculture in the High School (3:2:3). F, S.

4305. Vocational Agriculture Program Development (3:2:2). Department approval observation and planning of high school vocational agriculture programs.

4306. Student Teaching (3). Prerequisite: Senior standing in agricultural education.

Figure 2. List of courses and course descriptions offered in agricultural education including new agricultural communications courses in 1988 at Texas Tech University. Adapted from "Courses in Agricultural Education. (AGED)," by Office of Official Publications, 1988, *Bulletin of Texas Tech University Undergraduate Catalog 1988-1989*, p. 96-97.

Figure 3



Courses in Agricultural Education. (AGED)

2300. Introduction to Agricultural Sciences Development (3:3:0). Prerequisite: Sophomore standing or departmental approval. History and principles of vocational education, community assessment of agricultural programs planning, and development of agricultural youth organization. (Writing Intensive)

3302. Agricultural Data Base Networks, Information Systems, and Populace (3:3:0). Computer hardware and software used in agricultural data base networks, and the interface with the agricultural populace. F, S, SS.

3303. Communicating Agriculture to the Public (3:2:2). Principles and procedures in communicating agricultural news and information to general and specialized audiences through presentations and various media. S.

3330. Interrelationships of Agricultural Agency Information Systems (3:2:2). Prerequisite: Sophomore standing or departmental approval. Utilization of agricultural service systems to disseminate information to traditional and nontraditional agricultural clientele. Emphasis on USDA organizations.

3331. Principles of Agricultural Leadership (3:3:0). Application of leadership principles with emphasis on interpersonal and personal skills, dynamics of organizational structure, and institutional and agency leadership. For student teaching only.

4000. Internship (V1-12).

4301. Agricultural Education Problems (3). Prerequisite: Senior standing and approval of department chairperson. Individual investigation. May be repeated for credit. F, S, SS.

4302. Transfer of Agricultural Technology (3:3:0). Prerequisite: Junior standing or departmental approval. Examination of processes by which professional agriculturalists influence the introduction, adoption, and diffusion of technological change. F.

4304. Methods of Teaching Agriscience in the Secondary School (3:2:3). F, S.

4306. Student Teaching (3). Prerequisite: Senior standing in agricultural education.

Figure 3. List of courses and course descriptions offered in agricultural education including new agricultural communications courses in 1994 at Texas Tech University. Adapted from "Courses in Agricultural Education. (AGED)," by Office of Official Publications, 1994, *Undergraduate Catalog 1994-1995 Bulletin of Texas Tech University,* p. 101.

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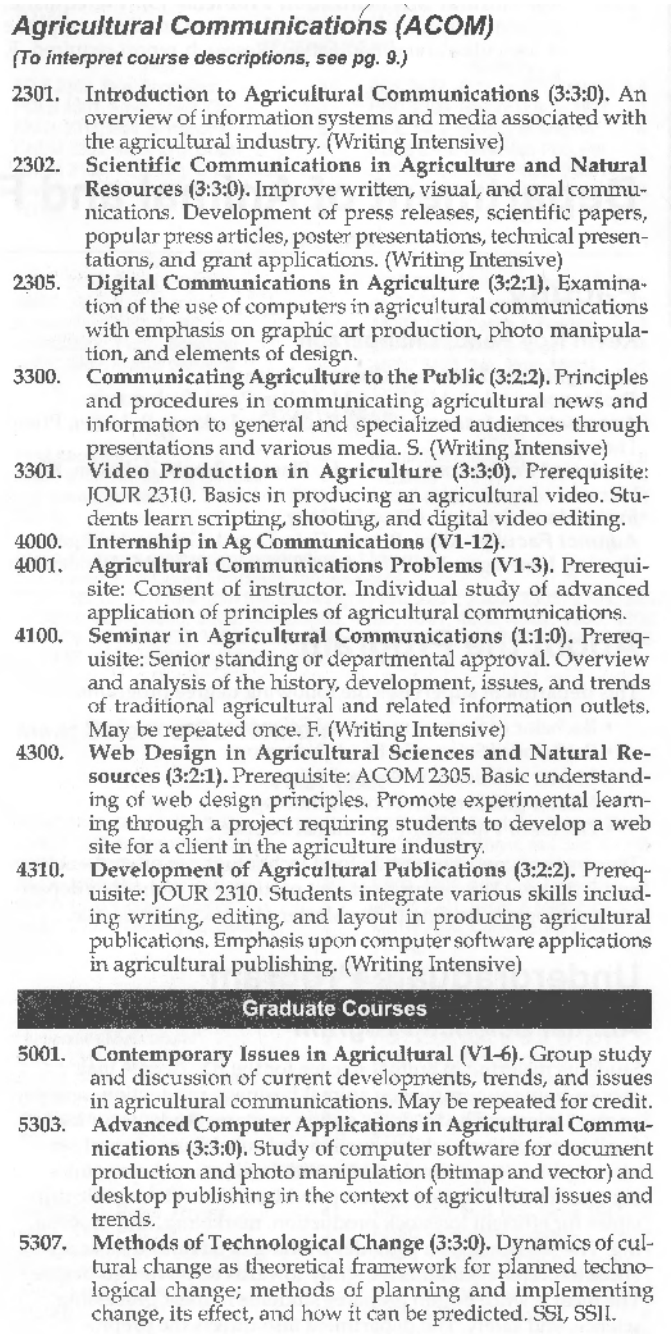
Figure 4



Agricultural Communications (ACOM)

(To interpret course descriptions, see pg. 9.)

2301. **Introduction to Agricultural Communications (3:3:0).** An overview of information systems and media associated with the agricultural industry. (Writing Intensive)

2302. **Scientific Communications in Agriculture and Natural Resources (3:3:0).** Improve written, visual, and oral communications. Development of press releases, scientific papers, popular press articles, poster presentations, technical presentations, and grant applications. (Writing Intensive)

2305. **Digital Communications in Agriculture (3:2:1).** Examination of the use of computers in agricultural communications with emphasis on graphic art production, photo manipulation, and elements of design.

3300. **Communicating Agriculture to the Public (3:2:2).** Principles and procedures in communicating agricultural news and information to general and specialized audiences through presentations and various media. S. (Writing Intensive)

3301. **Video Production in Agriculture (3:3:0).** Prerequisite: JOUR 2310. Basics in producing an agricultural video. Students learn scripting, shooting, and digital video editing.

4000. **Internship in Ag Communications (V1-12).**

4001. **Agricultural Communications Problems (V1-3).** Prerequisite: Consent of instructor. Individual study of advanced application of principles of agricultural communications.

4100. **Seminar in Agricultural Communications (1:1:0).** Prerequisite: Senior standing or departmental approval. Overview and analysis of the history, development, issues, and trends of traditional agricultural and related information outlets. May be repeated once. F. (Writing Intensive)

4300. **Web Design in Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (3:2:1).** Prerequisite: ACOM 2305. Basic understanding of web design principles. Promote experimental learning through a project requiring students to develop a web site for a client in the agriculture industry.

4310. **Development of Agricultural Publications (3:2:2).** Prerequisite: JOUR 2310. Students integrate various skills including writing, editing, and layout in producing agricultural publications. Emphasis upon computer software applications in agricultural publishing. (Writing Intensive)

Graduate Courses

5001. **Contemporary Issues in Agricultural (V1-6).** Group study and discussion of current developments, trends, and issues in agricultural communications. May be repeated for credit.

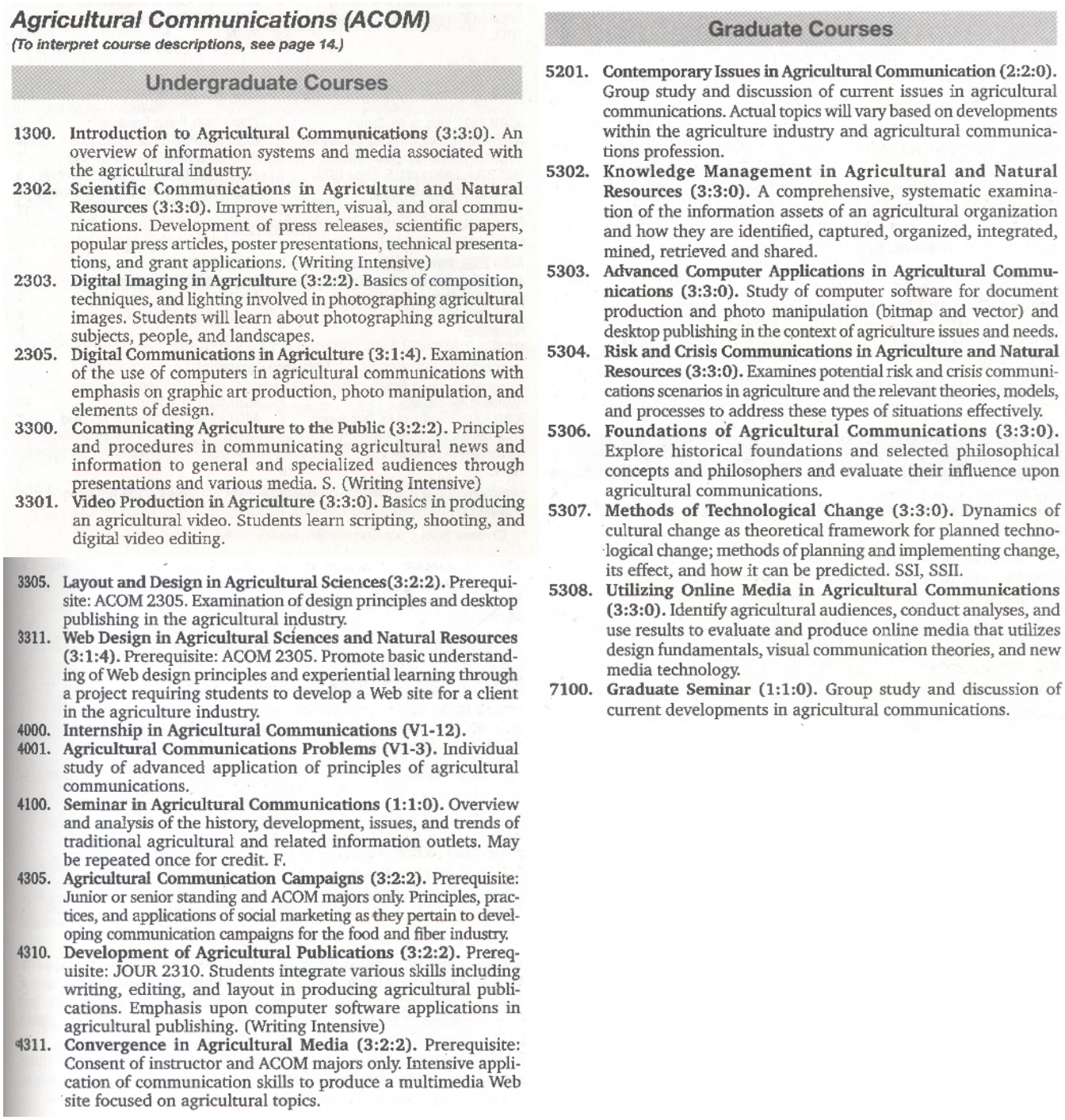
5303. **Advanced Computer Applications in Agricultural Communications (3:3:0).** Study of computer software for document production and photo manipulation (bitmap and vector) and desktop publishing in the context of agricultural issues and trends.

5307. **Methods of Technological Change (3:3:0).** Dynamics of cultural change as theoretical framework for planned technological change; methods of planning and implementing change, its effect, and how it can be predicted. SSI, SSII.

Figure 4. Undergraduate and graduate courses and descriptions offered in agricultural communications at Texas Tech University in 2005. This includes newly developed courses through 2001-2005. Adapted from "Agricultural Communications (ACOM)," by Office of Official Publications, 2005, *Texas Tech University Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog 2005-2006*, p. 99.

Research

Figure 5



Agricultural Communications (ACOM)

(To interpret course descriptions, see page 14.)

Undergraduate Courses

1300. Introduction to Agricultural Communications (3:3:0). An overview of information systems and media associated with the agricultural industry.

2302. Scientific Communications in Agriculture and Natural Resources (3:3:0). Improve written, visual, and oral communications. Development of press releases, scientific papers, popular press articles, poster presentations, technical presentations, and grant applications. (Writing Intensive)

2303. Digital Imaging in Agriculture (3:2:2). Basics of composition, techniques, and lighting involved in photographing agricultural images. Students will learn about photographing agricultural subjects, people, and landscapes.

2305. Digital Communications in Agriculture (3:1:4). Examination of the use of computers in agricultural communications with emphasis on graphic art production, photo manipulation, and elements of design.

3300. Communicating Agriculture to the Public (3:2:2). Principles and procedures in communicating agricultural news and information to general and specialized audiences through presentations and various media. S. (Writing Intensive)

3301. Video Production in Agriculture (3:3:0). Basics in producing an agricultural video. Students learn scripting, shooting, and digital video editing.

3305. Layout and Design in Agricultural Sciences(3:2:2). Prerequisite: ACOM 2305. Examination of design principles and desktop publishing in the agricultural industry.

3311. Web Design in Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (3:1:4). Prerequisite: ACOM 2305. Promote basic understanding of Web design principles and experiential learning through a project requiring students to develop a Web site for a client in the agriculture industry.

4000. Internship in Agricultural Communications (V1-12).

4001. Agricultural Communications Problems (V1-3). Individual study of advanced application of principles of agricultural communications.

4100. Seminar in Agricultural Communications (1:1:0). Overview and analysis of the history, development, issues, and trends of traditional agricultural and related information outlets. May be repeated once for credit. F.

4305. Agricultural Communication Campaigns (3:2:2). Prerequisite: Junior or senior standing and ACOM majors only. Principles, practices, and applications of social marketing as they pertain to developing communication campaigns for the food and fiber industry.

4310. Development of Agricultural Publications (3:2:2). Prerequisite: JOUR 2310. Students integrate various skills including writing, editing, and layout in producing agricultural publications. Emphasis upon computer software applications in agricultural publishing. (Writing Intensive)

4311. Convergence in Agricultural Media (3:2:2). Prerequisite: Consent of instructor and ACOM majors only. Intensive application of communication skills to produce a multimedia Web site focused on agricultural topics.

Graduate Courses

5201. Contemporary Issues in Agricultural Communication (2:2:0). Group study and discussion of current issues in agricultural communications. Actual topics will vary based on developments within the agriculture industry and agricultural communications profession.

5302. Knowledge Management in Agricultural and Natural Resources (3:3:0). A comprehensive, systematic examination of the information assets of an agricultural organization and how they are identified, captured, organized, integrated, mined, retrieved and shared.

5303. Advanced Computer Applications in Agricultural Communications (3:3:0). Study of computer software for document production and photo manipulation (bitmap and vector) and desktop publishing in the context of agriculture issues and needs.

5304. Risk and Crisis Communications in Agriculture and Natural Resources (3:3:0). Examines potential risk and crisis communications scenarios in agriculture and the relevant theories, models, and processes to address these types of situations effectively.

5306. Foundations of Agricultural Communications (3:3:0). Explore historical foundations and selected philosophical concepts and philosophers and evaluate their influence upon agricultural communications.

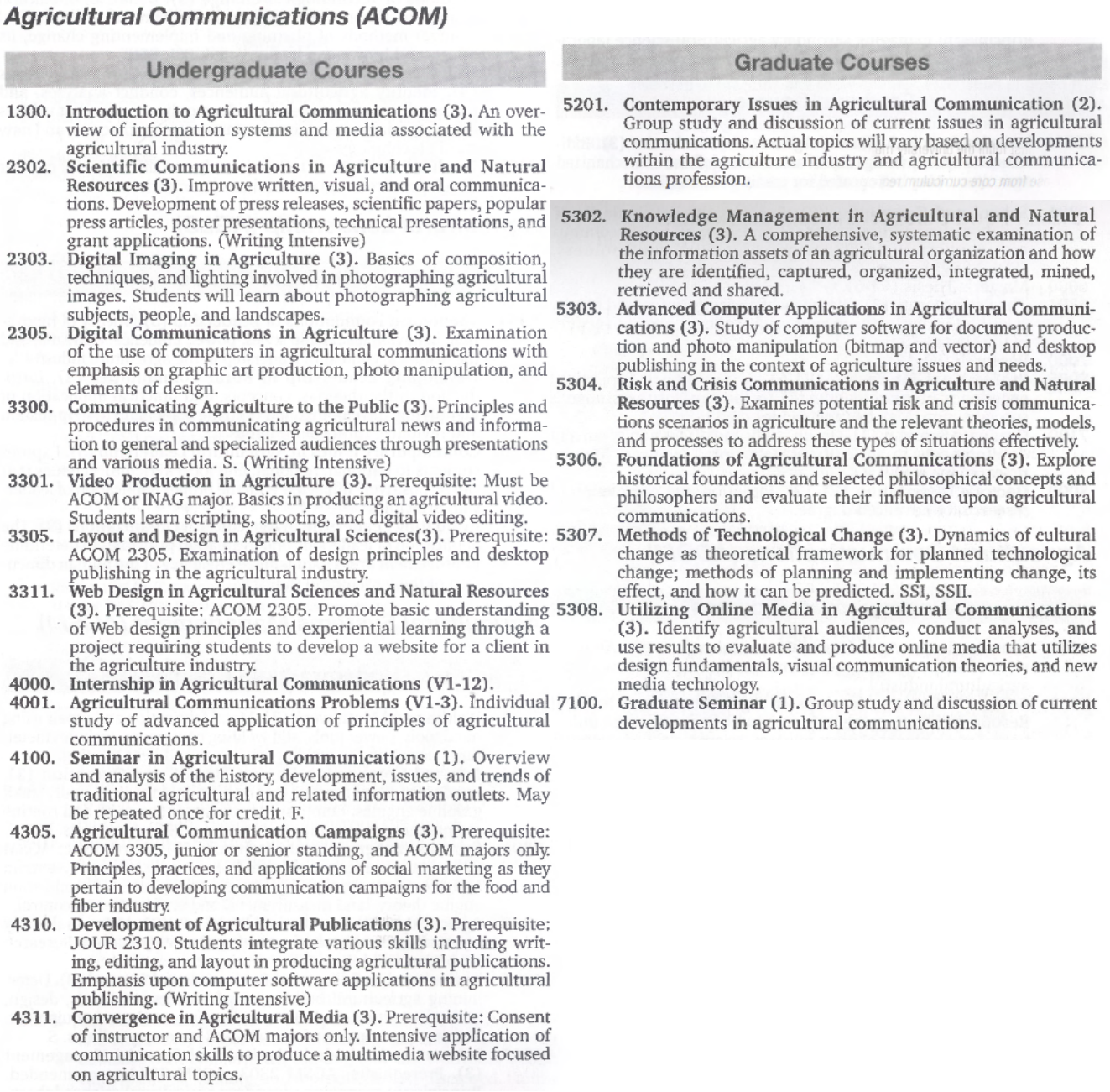
5307. Methods of Technological Change (3:3:0). Dynamics of cultural change as theoretical framework for planned technological change; methods of planning and implementing change, its effect, and how it can be predicted. SSI, SSII.

5308. Utilizing Online Media in Agricultural Communications (3:3:0). Identify agricultural audiences, conduct analyses, and use results to evaluate and produce online media that utilizes design fundamentals, visual communication theories, and new media technology.

7100. Graduate Seminar (1:1:0). Group study and discussion of current developments in agricultural communications.

Figure 5. Undergraduate and graduate course offerings and descriptions for agricultural communications students offered in 2010 at Texas Tech University. This includes several new courses added between 2008-2010. Adapted from "Agricultural Communications (ACOM)," by Office of Official Publications, 2010, *Texas Tech University 2010-2011 Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog*, p. 109 & 111.

Figure 6



Agricultural Communications (ACOM)

Undergraduate Courses

1300. Introduction to Agricultural Communications (3). An overview of information systems and media associated with the agricultural industry.

2302. Scientific Communications in Agriculture and Natural Resources (3). Improve written, visual, and oral communications. Development of press releases, scientific papers, popular press articles, poster presentations, technical presentations, and grant applications. (Writing Intensive)

2303. Digital Imaging in Agriculture (3). Basics of composition, techniques, and lighting involved in photographing agricultural images. Students will learn about photographing agricultural subjects, people, and landscapes.

2305. Digital Communications in Agriculture (3). Examination of the use of computers in agricultural communications with emphasis on graphic art production, photo manipulation, and elements of design.

3300. Communicating Agriculture to the Public (3). Principles and procedures in communicating agricultural news and information to general and specialized audiences through presentations and various media. S. (Writing Intensive)

3301. Video Production in Agriculture (3). Prerequisite: Must be ACOM or INAG major. Basics in producing an agricultural video. Students learn scripting, shooting, and digital video editing.

3305. Layout and Design in Agricultural Sciences(3). Prerequisite: ACOM 2305. Examination of design principles and desktop publishing in the agricultural industry.

3311. Web Design in Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (3). Prerequisite: ACOM 2305. Promote basic understanding of Web design principles and experiential learning through a project requiring students to develop a website for a client in the agriculture industry.

4000. Internship in Agricultural Communications (V1-12).

4001. Agricultural Communications Problems (V1-3). Individual study of advanced application of principles of agricultural communications.

4100. Seminar in Agricultural Communications (1). Overview and analysis of the history, development, issues, and trends of traditional agricultural and related information outlets. May be repeated once for credit. F.

4305. Agricultural Communication Campaigns (3). Prerequisite: ACOM 3305, junior or senior standing, and ACOM majors only. Principles, practices, and applications of social marketing as they pertain to developing communication campaigns for the food and fiber industry.

4310. Development of Agricultural Publications (3). Prerequisite: JOUR 2310. Students integrate various skills including writing, editing, and layout in producing agricultural publications. Emphasis upon computer software applications in agricultural publishing. (Writing Intensive)

4311. Convergence in Agricultural Media (3). Prerequisite: Consent of instructor and ACOM majors only. Intensive application of communication skills to produce a multimedia website focused on agricultural topics.

Graduate Courses

5201. Contemporary Issues in Agricultural Communication (2). Group study and discussion of current issues in agricultural communications. Actual topics will vary based on developments within the agriculture industry and agricultural communications profession.

5302. Knowledge Management in Agricultural and Natural Resources (3). A comprehensive, systematic examination of the information assets of an agricultural organization and how they are identified, captured, organized, integrated, mined, retrieved and shared.

5303. Advanced Computer Applications in Agricultural Communications (3). Study of computer software for document production and photo manipulation (bitmap and vector) and desktop publishing in the context of agriculture issues and needs.

5304. Risk and Crisis Communications in Agriculture and Natural Resources (3). Examines potential risk and crisis communications scenarios in agriculture and the relevant theories, models, and processes to address these types of situations effectively.

5306. Foundations of Agricultural Communications (3). Explore historical foundations and selected philosophical concepts and philosophers and evaluate their influence upon agricultural communications.

5307. Methods of Technological Change (3). Dynamics of cultural change as theoretical framework for planned technological change; methods of planning and implementing change, its effect, and how it can be predicted. SSI, SSII.

5308. Utilizing Online Media in Agricultural Communications (3). Identify agricultural audiences, conduct analyses, and use results to evaluate and produce online media that utilizes design fundamentals, visual communication theories, and new media technology.

7100. Graduate Seminar (1). Group study and discussion of current developments in agricultural communications.

Figure 6. Current listing of undergraduate and graduate courses and descriptions offered in agricultural communications at Texas Tech University. Adapted from "Agricultural Communications (ACOM)," by Office of Official Publications, 2012, *Texas Tech University Catalog Undergraduate and Graduate 2012-2013*, p. 123-124.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The agricultural communications degree program at TTU started as an option, later became a specialization, then evolved into a degree program. This follows suit with Tucker et al. (2003) and their conclusions of agricultural communications being derived from journalism and mass communications courses. After a transition period of creating agricultural communications courses, the program area was able to separate from mass communications and develop its own courses, while continuing to require students to take several courses in mass communications.

Agricultural communications is often a misunderstood degree program (Weckman et al., 2000). Regardless, agricultural communications programs are growing, and because of this it may take time for the programs to experience institutional support (Weckman et al., 2000). This study is an example of how gaining institutional support can be a long and tedious process. The process TTU went through, in first recognizing a need for a program, developing relationships with other colleges to meet those needs, creating specialized courses, and then evolving into degree programs, can be useful to other institutions that are looking to create new or modified degree programs in agricultural communications. Creating a degree program is not a quick and easy process. It takes many months, and in the case of TTU's Doctor of Philosophy program, many years to develop and obtain approval.

Course offerings have evolved over the years in order to meet employer demands which researchers (Doerfert & Miller, 1996; Irlbeck & Akers, 2009; Morgan, 2012; Sprecker & Rudd, 1998) have found to be a vital component of agricultural communications programs due to the ever changing work environment. The information provided here can help other institutions decide what course offerings could be offered in undergraduate and graduate agricultural communications programs.

It is important to understand where a program has been and where it is going, and the only way to do that is to understand its history. Other institutions who have agricultural communications programs should conduct a similar historical analysis to better understand the development of their programs. Efforts should be made to collect oral histories of influential faculty and students who can provide rich details about the program. These stories could then be used in communication materials or to provide a broader picture of the academic discipline.

Knauft (2006) discussed how undergraduate students are unfamiliar with a program's history. With the findings from this case study, a historical timeline can be created and displayed in the agricultural education and communications building. This timeline could display important dates and relevant events throughout the course of TTU's agricultural communications degree program. The department could display this in the building for students, faculty, and other stakeholders to see. A display would help students, faculty, and stakeholders understand where the department has been and anticipate what the future may hold.

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